

we as an economy, we as a country, are doing extremely well. We have to feel good. We have to have confidence in our economy, confidence in our Government. We can only do that by understanding that we need to work together in a bipartisan fashion to move the country along.

We can do that by, first of all, allowing up-or-down votes on the minimum wage, repeal of the gas tax, and if the majority leader wants to bring forward the TEAM Act, let us have a debate on that like we have done in the Senate for over 200 years.

#### NUCLEAR WASTE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I also say that my friend, my colleague from the State of Nevada, Senator BRYAN, is also going to address the Senate on a very important issue dealing with nuclear waste. I underscore and underline his statement and join with him in recognizing that we have some serious problems in transporting nuclear waste across this country. It can be avoided if we follow what, again, the President wants to do and not have the interim storage of nuclear waste.

Mr. DORGAN addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota [Mr. DORGAN] is recognized.

Mr. BRYAN. Mr. President, I wonder if my friend and colleague will yield for the purpose of a unanimous consent request.

#### EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. BRYAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at the conclusion of the remarks of the distinguished Senator from North Dakota, that morning business be extended for a period of 10 minutes so I might be permitted to address the Senate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BRYAN. I thank my colleague, and I thank the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota is recognized for 10 minutes.

#### NOT GRIDLOCK, BUT A GAG RULE

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, it has been kind of an interesting couple of days in the Senate, and I noticed in the newspaper this morning in the headlines the word "gridlock," which I am sure will please some in this Chamber, because yesterday they were trying to persuade the press to use the word "gridlock." They said what is happening in the Senate is gridlock.

What happened yesterday was quite interesting. Those who suggest this is gridlock in the Senate came to the floor of the Senate yesterday, offered a piece of legislation and then, prior to any debate beginning on that legislation, the same people who offered the

legislation filed a cloture motion to shut off debate that had not yet begun on a piece of legislation that had been offered only a minute before.

Someone who does not serve in the Senate or does not understand the Senate rules might scratch their head and say, "How on Earth could someone do that with a straight face? How could someone, without laughing out loud, offer a piece of legislation before debate begins, file cloture to shut off debate on a piece of legislation they have just now filed, and then claim that the other side is guilty of causing gridlock?"

Only in the Senate can that be done without someone laughing out loud at how preposterous that claim is.

This is not gridlock. It is more like a gag rule, where you bring a piece of legislation to the Senate because you control the Senate floor and you say, "Here's what we want to do, and, by the way, we're going to use parliamentary shenanigans to fill up the parliamentary tree so no one has an opportunity to offer any amendments of any kind, and then we are going to file a motion to shut off debate before you even get a chance to debate."

No, that is not gridlock, that is a gag rule. From a parliamentary standpoint, it can be done. It was not done when the Democrats were in control in the 103d Congress. We never did what is now being done on the floor of the Senate: filling the legislative tree completely and saying, "By the way, you have no opportunity, those of you who feel differently, to offer amendments."

But we will work through this, and we will get beyond this. I will say to those who claim it is gridlock, it is clear the Senate is not moving and the Senate is not acting, but at least the major part of that, it seems to me, is because we have people who decide that it is going to be their agenda or no agenda, and they insist on their agenda without debate, their agenda without amendments.

What we have are three proposals that have been ricocheting around the Chamber the last couple of days, and there is a very simple solution. We have a proposal called the minimum wage. Many of us feel there ought to be some kind of adjustment in the minimum wage. It has been 5 years. Those working at the bottom of the economic ladder have not had a 1-penny increase in their salaries. Many of us feel there ought to be some adjustment there.

The second issue is, the majority leader wants to cut or reduce the gas tax by 4.3 cents a gallon.

And the third issue is a labor issue called the TEAM Act.

The way to solve this, instead of linking them together in Byzantine or strange ways, is simply to bring all three measures to the floor one at a time, allow amendments to be offered and then have an up-or-down vote. This is not higher math; it is simple arithmetic. Bring the bills to the floor.

Our side has no interest, in my judgment, in filibustering on any of those

bills, at least not that I am aware of. I do not think we ought to filibuster any of those bills. Bring the bills to the floor, have a debate, entertain amendments, have a final vote, and the winner wins. That is not a very complicated approach. It is the approach that would solve this problem.

I listened carefully yesterday to a speech on the Senate floor that was essentially a campaign speech—hard, tough, direct. It was a Presidential campaign speech. You have a right to do that on the Senate floor. I do not think it advances the interests of helping the Senate do its business. I almost felt during part of that speech yesterday there should be bunting put up on the walls of the Senate, perhaps some balloons, maybe even a band to put all this in the proper perspective.

The Senate is not going to be able to do its work if it becomes for the next 6 months a political convention floor. I hope that we can talk through that in the coming days and decide the Senate is going to have to do its work. We have appropriations bills we have to pass. We have other things to do that are serious business items on the agenda of this country. I do not think that we can do this if the Senate becomes the floor of a political convention from now until November.

I want to speak just for a moment about the proposed reduction in the gasoline tax. Gasoline prices spiked up by 20 to 30 cents a gallon recently. When gasoline prices spiked up and people would drive to the gas pumps to fill up their car, they were pretty angry about that, wondering, "What has happened to gasoline prices?"

Instead of putting a hound dog on the trail of trying to figure out who did what and why, what happened to gas prices, immediately we had some people come to the floor of the Senate and say, "OK, gas prices spiked up 20, 30 cents a gallon. Let's cut the 4.3-cent gas tax put on there nearly 3 years ago."

I do not understand. I guess the same people, if they had a toothache, would get a haircut. I do not see the relationship. Gas prices are pushed up 20 to 30 cents so they are going to come and increase the Federal deficit by cutting a 4.3-cent gas tax.

I would like to see lower gas taxes as well, but I am not going to increase the Federal deficit. The Federal deficit has been cut in half in the last 3 years. Why? Because some of us had the courage to vote for spending decreases and, yes, revenue increases to cut the deficit in half.

The central question I have is this: If you cut the gas tax, who gets the money? There are a lot of pockets in America. There are small pockets, big pockets, high pockets, and low pockets. You know who has the big pockets and small pockets. The oil industry always had the big pockets. The driver has always had the small pockets.

Guess what? When you take a look at what is going to happen when you see